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LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR,

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

INTENDED NEW DOCKS

TO BE ESTABLISHED AT WAPPING.

L O N D O N:

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1796.

[Price One Shilling.]

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE THE LORD MAYOR

OF THE CITY OF LONDON



IN THE

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE LORD MAYOR

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE idea of presenting the following pages to the public inspection was suddenly conceived and rapidly executed ; only a fortnight having elapsed between their commencement, and being sent to the press. They are moreover the production of a juvenile pen, hitherto employed solely in the avocations of business. Under all these disadvantages, no one will be surprised or disappointed at finding this work deficient in strict accuracy of expression, logical arrangement of argument, or elegance of diction. The author was induced to intrude on the world from a firm conviction of the high importance of the subject he treats, and from a full persuasion that it is greatly misunderstood by many persons who oppose the measure. He pretends not to bring forward any thing new on the subject ; he only wishes to impress forcibly on the public mind facts which have long been established as incontro-

vertible, but which the city of London, as a corporate body, and the persons interested in the present legal quays, seem to lose sight of, in their procedure relative to the Wet Docks, Quays, and Warehouses proposed to be established in Wapping.

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L E T T E R
TO THE
RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR,
&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

AS Chief Magistrate of the City of London, a situation which you fill with so much credit to yourself, and advantage to the public, I conceive the following pages are not improperly addressed to you. The measure they are proposed to enforce, is a measure of the utmost importance to the city over which you preside; and therefore, I trust, I may claim the honour of your attention.

It is, I believe, universally acknowledged that Great Britain at large, and the City of

London in particular, derive their grandeur and opulence from Commerce. Destitute of that source of supply, the riches, the refinement, the rank and consequence of this nation would never have existed. With the increase of her Commerce we may trace the gradual advancement of this City to its present exalted situation ; and only in proportion as the security and extension of trade are promoted will London flourish. In these leading principles I am so fully assured of your Lordship's coincidence, as a man of sense and a Merchant, that I will no longer detain you on them.

From the insular situation of Great Britain, and the disposition of its inhabitants, London always cultivated a spirit of Commerce. So early as one hundred years after the Christian Æra, we find her mentioned as possessing a distinguished rank in trade above the other cities of Europe. I will not now go into a detail of the articles of Commerce of that day ; but will only observe that the pre-eminence she then acquired she has ever since maintained, in spite of all contending difficulties. What some of these difficulties are, their remedy, and how that pre-eminence can best be continued and extended, is the object of the present discussion.

The

The natural consequence of an increase of trade to any country is the introduction of the greatest extremes; riches and luxury, refinement and depravity; good and evil alike accompany the aggrandizement of Commerce. It would be well, if the evil only accompanied the good in that proportion which rendered it inconsiderable or unworthy of notice; but unfortunately the contrary is the case.

In an age like the present, when almost every art and science has experienced the hand of improvement, it appears singular that the Commerce of London, so justly termed the most important object that can be presented to a British view, should so long have been suffered to struggle with difficulties, inimical in the highest degree to its security and advancement. Nothing but that spirit of enterprize and perseverance, which hath always distinguished the Merchants of this country, could have enabled them to raise, in defiance of such numerous disadvantages, the trade of the metropolis to its present extended and flourishing condition.

No department of trade has been so particularly exposed to the difficulties I allude to,

as the West India Trade. For more than a century it has experienced a progressive accumulation of inconvenience and loss. Within these few years the evil has arrived at that enormity, as would be incredible to all but those who made it their business to enquire into it. Meetings were held by the Merchants, and a Committee appointed on the 10th of September, 1793, “ for the purpose of taking all such measures, “ by conferences with public bodies, or otherwise, as might best facilitate the discharge “ of ships then arrived ; and also prevent future inconveniences in the discharge of West “ India shipping ;” to the delays attending which, and the distance of the ships from the quays, with the confined space of those quays, and the warehouses attached to them, are to be attributed all the injuries in question. On the 20th of December following, the Committee laid their report before a meeting of Merchants, held at the Marine Society’s office ; at which the present Sir Richard (then Mr. Neave) was in the chair. This report having never been made public, has most likely never had your Lordship’s perusal. It contains, however, such full and interesting information on the subject, that

that I imagine an extract from it may not be unacceptable*.

To prove that the complicated injuries, which the merchants had complained of, were real, and not imaginary, I need only bring forward an estimate made at that time, of the amount of the plunderage, solely on West India produce, without including any other losses. It was then proved, that the embezzlement on sugar alone, in the river Thames, was annually 200,000 l. of which 50,000 l. was stated as the loss of the revenue, for the port of London, in duties; and 150,000 l. that of the proprietors of the goods. The Merchants had always been vainly endeavouring to remove these evils by gentle means, still wishing, if possible, to continue the management of trade in its former channels. All partial alterations, however, in the water-side system, were at length found ineffectual. The defect was radical; it could not be cured without a total reform.

At this period a plan was brought forward by a Merchant, which, on examination, was found so fully adequate to remedy the evils in

* See Appendix, No. I.

question,

question, and so fraught with advantage to the Commerce of London in general, that it was adopted, not only by the West India Merchants, but Merchants of every description. This plan is now brought forward under the title of the London Docks.

It is not merely on account of the present losses and inconveniencies sustained by trade, that a new system of river management is rendered necessary. There are other reasons of the greatest importance. Upon the security and accommodation of Commerce, depends in a great measure its future increase. Upon the increase of Commerce, depends materially the improvement of the political rank of this country. If we look to the nations around us, we may perceive from their situation, the necessity of immediately adopting the most ample system of commercial accommodation and security. Taking the Revolutions of France and Holland in this point of view, they afford us a striking subject of consideration. France, for these seven or eight years past, appears to have exerted her utmost efforts to compass her own destruction as a trading country. She seems to have abandoned all idea of deriving advantage from the West India colonies. Her plan seems to
pillage

pillage and destroy, not to cherish and protect them. The consequence has been, that they have fallen for the chief part into our hands. It is true, the most important of these possessions are, at this moment, involved in a contest, the issue of which may possibly again deprive us of them. But this is not likely to be the case. The French, at present, do not seem disposed to alter their principles of conduct towards their colonies; and it is utterly impossible, that with those principles they should ultimately retain them. Every planter in the French islands will consider the British protection as the only means of preserving his estate, and seek that protection accordingly.

The Revolution in Holland affords us a view different from that of France, as to trade. The French, by the destruction of their trade, have increased ours; but the Dutch have made an actual transfer, as it were, of theirs. We have acquired the trade of Holland, unimpaired by Jacobin influence, and her colonies untainted by French principles.

England then is at this moment the emporium of the world. She will become so to a much greater extent, on the establishment of peace. France, whatever may be her final mode

mode of government, will then be exhausted by her long and violent efforts in war. She will have to recover from seven or eight years constant anarchy. Much time must elapse before she can re-establish her credit, or revive her manufactures. A still greater time must elapse, previous to her again acquiring consequence in trade. During this commercial debility, England will have to supply France, as well with British manufactures, as foreign articles. If then we suffer inconvenience and loss in the present situation of trade; if there be an absolute necessity, at this moment, for an extension of quays and warehouses, how much will not that necessity be increased, when, at a future period, London becomes the agent of all Europe.

It would be needless, however, to dwell any longer upon the circumstances which point out the necessity of reforming our commercial system. No man, I think, can deny the existence of that necessity. The only question of doubt is, what plan is most proper to be adopted to obtain reform.

A plan of this sort, to render it worthy of pursuit, should have in view at once the advantage

vantage of the Revenue, and the security and convenience of trade. Let us enquire how far the plan of the Merchants combines these essential points.

In forming a system for the protection and advancement of trade, we should always endeavour to keep the different component parts as nearly united as possible. In this important particular, the London Dock Company appear to have succeeded. They propose making, on an extensive but united scale, capacious Wet Docks, Quays, and Warehouses.

Were I inclined to expatiate on the good accruing, to any port, from the formation of Wet Docks, nothing would be more easy than to fill a volume. I will, however, content myself with referring all those, who doubt their utility, to the effects produced by them on the towns of Liverpool and Hull, both of which owe the greater part of their trade to their Wet Docks.

The spot selected by the Committee of Merchants, is highly favourable in point both of situation and other attendant circumstances. A great part of the ground is waste and uncultivated, and but a very small space occupied by

by buildings *. It lies between Ratcliffe highway and Wapping ; extending from Nightingale-lane to new Gravel-lane ; and is proposed to contain three docks for the reception of ships, and one for lighters ; with quays and warehouses surrounding them. In order to avoid the many dangers incidental to river navigation, and more particularly those frequently experienced in the circuitous passage round the Isle of Dogs, and through the Pool, it is intended to make a Canal of communication between the docks and the river, having its entrance at Blackwall, and forming a channel of two miles and three quarters in extent, which again disembogues itself into the river at Bell-dock. There will also be an inlet for lighters and other craft, at Hermitage-dock.

In discussing the advantages which accompany this plan, I am indebted for much information to a gentleman who wrote on the subject at the close of the year 1793. He describes them at once with comprehensiveness and precision : He says, “ these Docks would treble

* In adjusting the purchase of these lands or houses, (when it may be necessary to pull down any that interfere with the plan), the value is to be fixed by a jury, unless amicably settled between the party concerned, and the Committee.

“ the present dispatch given at the legal quays,
 “ and all the conveniences flowing from
 “ thence. They would be central to the City,
 “ to the Customs, to the Excise; to Merchants,
 “ Tradesmen, Brokers, and Coopers; also to
 “ inspection, sale, delivery, and consumption:
 “ They would not disturb the present state of
 “ commerce, as to residences and employments
 “ dependent upon shipping, or the situation of
 “ manufactures established near the landing of
 “ those merchandises that are large and bulky;
 “ such as rope walks and sugar houses, lying
 “ on the east side of London, which compose
 “ more than one half of those houses in Lon-
 “ don. Being insulated with walls, and under
 “ regulations, these Docks would give con-
 “ venience and security to property; control
 “ and convenience to the revenue and its offi-
 “ cers, owing to their compactness; and they
 “ would at once strike at the root of all those
 “ illicit practices, which plunder the proprie-
 “ tors and defraud the Revenue; and also
 “ greatly check those receiving houses up and
 “ down the river, which form so great a part
 “ of the river plunderage.” He concludes a
 recital of benefits too numerous by far for me
 to insert here, with the following observation:

“ These Docks and Warehouses would create
 “ a fair competition with the legal quays ; de-
 “ stroy combinations ; lessen rents and charges ;
 “ and all those evils consequent to limited situ-
 “ ations.”

Having thus cursorily stated the good effects to be derived from an adoption of the Merchant's plan, I will quit this part of the subject, and hasten to consider the nature of the opposition which the measure encounters.

We may divide the opponents into two classes. The first and most considerable, is the City of London as a Corporate body. The latter may be called the river interest ; comprehending the proprietors of the legal quays, with the wharfingers, lightermen, gangsmen, and other descriptions of people who attend the water side, as the servants of trade.

As the situation of these two parties who oppose the intended plan is different, so their motive and conduct is different also. In considering these particulars, and replying to their objections, I will first take the river interest, as being of the least consequence. In so doing I will subdivide this class into the wharfingers and proprietors ; including in the former division the gangsmen, lightermen, &c. who on the

the

the present occasion are entirely biased by them.

Whenever a public question is agitated, it occasions naturally some degree of violence in the discussion. If the propriety of the case be evident, the violence is generally confined to the weaker side, by whom it is brought forward as a substitute for reason and argument. But nothing can justify the adoption of violence in that extent, as to lose entire sight of decency and truth. It is always a decided mark of a bad cause and low principles, when any individual, or body of men, oppose scurrility and invective, to plans of general good. Who, on reading, as he walks through London, hand-bills * stuck up in every street, of the most inflammatory tendency, will not feel his indignation moved towards those who thus endeavour to influence the minds of uninformed men, against a measure, which from the important advantages it professes to bring forward, ought at least to meet a candid and unprejudiced discussion? But how much will our indignation be increased, when we find

* For copies of one or two of these hand-bills, See Appendix, No. 2.

scurrility and invective to be exercised on those men from whom they derive even the bread they eat. Their conduct then is doubly base and contemptible. Let me ask these wharfingers, who are the persons they stigmatise with the titles of aliens and interested speculators? whom they charge with wishes to destroy the prosperity of London, by removing its trade to another place; whom they even accuse of a design to build a new city upon the ruins of the old; charges, in which they have alike abandoned good sense and good manners. As they seem to have forgotten to whom they apply these names, I will take the liberty of informing them. They have applied them to a description of men, to whose industry, abilities, and enterprising perseverance, London owes her opulence, and wharfingers their situation; without whom there would never have existed either quays or warehouses.

Nothing is more common than for men who take up the wrong side of any question, to make assertions, which when properly considered and answered, only expose their weakness so much the more. Of this nature are some of the wild incoherent affirmations of the handbills alluded to. One bill in particular is
strongly

strongly marked with absurdity. Not content with attempting to excite the prejudice of the inhabitants of London against the proposed measure; they make an insidious address to the people of Southwark, (who like all other people are too frequently governed by the impulse of the moment) stating, that one of the plans of the London Docks is to monopolise the unloading coal and corn ships. They then, in an affected, pompous, declamatory style, appeal to common sense, whether these articles will be cheaper from the new regulation, and make the answer in the negative. Now, with due submission to these gentlemen, common sense decides the question very differently. Common sense informs us, that whatever adds to the security of trade, extends it, and consequently renders the articles cheaper. I trust, however, that notwithstanding Mr. ANTI-TEN PER CENT. (whose signature is at the bottom of this bill) has abandoned his common sense, the people of Southwark will not abandon theirs; but judge the merits of this case impartially, and not rashly oppose a plan, which is intended to promote the good of the whole community.

The wharfingers pretend a zealous attachment to the rights of the City of London, and affect to stand forth as the champions of her charter and privileges. But the truth is, they are fearful of a decrease in their emoluments. They are under apprehensions, lest, by the adoption of the new system, their power of combination to encrease their charges at pleasure, a power which they have exercised with impunity for years, should be set aside. From this cause alone, result their apparent civic ardour and enthusiasm.

As, whatever may be the ostensible one, self-interest is the sole real actuating motive by which the wharfingers are governed in their present proceedings, I will take them upon that ground. I will suppose, that the establishment of the London Docks at Wapping would involve in utter ruin the present legal quays; that the Merchants would deprive them entirely of the emolument arising from the management of trade, without making them any compensation, (neither of which positions, however, are true), still they would have no right to oppose the plan. They should recollect, that wharfingers were made for the convenience of trade; not trade for the convenience

nience of wharfingers: that they are the servants; not the governors of trade: that they are not to retain it in any particular spot, to its own detriment, because it suits their accommodation; but that, wherever trade is removed, they are to follow it as appendages.

These circumstances, however, will not take place. The Merchants of London are too respectable, too humane a body of men, to adopt a line of conduct which, though it could not be taxed with injustice, might yet bear the smallest impression of illiberality. They proceed on very different principles, and wish not to deprive any man of what can be properly considered as due to him. They rather go into the opposite extreme. What then will be the real situation of the present legal quays, provided the London Docks are formed? Their situation will be precisely what it ought to be: they will still retain as much business as they can transact with propriety and convenience; and their emoluments will be fair and reasonable. They will still exclusively manage the Export department; with such portion of the Imports as their connections may command, or an attachment to the old method, (for every Merchant may exercise a discretion on that point),

point) ,bring to them. The lightermen, gangsmen, and other inferior descriptions of men, at present employed on the legal quays, who by the proposed alteration would be more than sufficient for the business of those quays, have only to transfer their attendance from the old situation to the new one. Their means of subsistence would in no way be lessened. As from the present aspect of the eastern world, we may look forward to an immense acquisition of trade to the India Company, it is highly probable, (nay, it is very unlikely to be otherwise) that some of the present legal quays and warehouses will be occupied by them.

I must own my great surprize at finding, among the list of abettors to this opposition men for whom, though I have not the honour of their personal acquaintance, I cannot divest myself of sentiments of the highest respect; whose talents and fortune place them deservedly in the foremost ranks of society. To say that these men should oppose a system of general utility, merely because, as proprietors of the old quays, their private interests were interfered with, would be an insult to their principles. But their conduct becomes strange indeed, if I consider them as knowing, (what they

they might have known) that even this was not the case; that it never was the intention of the Merchants to violate property, but to do justice to individuals and their country at the same time. In no way can I account for their procedure, but by saving their honour at the expence of impeaching their judgment; by supposing them to have been misled by evil designing men, who, like Belial of old,

Have made the worse, appear
The better reason.

Having thus endeavoured to consider the opposition of the River interest in the way I imagine it deserves, by contending that they have no right to make any opposition at all; the City of London, in a Corporate capacity, next demands a reply. Their pleas of opposition are, that the Merchants' plan is a direct infringement of their privileges, and violation of their charter. They style the plan a dangerous innovation, and consider its adherents as speculators and projectors; they at the same time propose a plan of their own, as deserving a preference to that of the Merchants.

From education and disposition, no man can entertain a higher veneration for the char-

ter of London ; or a greater respect for their privileges than myself ; and I trust, that in no wise shall I transgress that veneration and respect, in this my first intrusion upon their notice. I am, however, far from being of opinion, that the charges of dangerous innovation and wild speculation can be properly applied to the Merchants on the present occasion ; or that the charter and privileges of the city of London will bear them out in opposing the present plan.

The charter of the city of London, and indeed of every other corporate town, was originally granted for the express purpose of their deriving some exclusive advantage, which the nature of the times afforded. The object, which to the citizens of London was always of superior importance to every other, was trade ; and we find accordingly, that the spirit of their charters has constantly had commercial benefit in view. In proportion as the increased knowledge and refinement of succeeding ages have improved trade, we find alterations in the charter. But the wisdom of the Legislature has constantly avoided the grant of those powers which might operate to the injury of trade. At no period whatever has the
City

City of London been invested with the authority of deciding where the merchandize of the port should or should not be landed. The adjustment of these points was always referred to the Court of Exchequer. The only stipulation was, that in this adjustment they should not appoint any quays, but within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Court of Conservacy for London.* Where then is the violation of her charter which the city is said to experience from the appointment of new wharfs and quays, within these limits? An appointment in which the Court of Exchequer only perform their duty, by affording a necessary accommodation to trade. She cannot surely complain of violation where there is nothing to be violated.

As to the infringement of the City privileges, which is the result of the Merchants' plan; it is such, as from the nature of the case cannot be avoided; and is, besides, so trifling in itself, that it does not afford a moment's objection. It is true that the Water Bailiff is deprived of interference in the now

* See Extracts from Acts of Parliament on this subject, Appendix, No. III.

proposed London Docks; but in exchange for that small concession of privilege, the City of London acquire benefits that are beyond all competition. But even if it were otherwise, if the City, instead of giving up a trifling badge of authority, for which they receive ample compensation, were called upon to concede some privilege of importance, ought they not voluntarily to make the concession for the advantage of that Commerce from which they derive such lucrative Revenues ?

If it be true, which I should conceive no man will deny, that the Commerce of London is what gives consequence to the Charter of London ; that the interests of Commerce, and the interests of London, are inseparable, it follows, of course, that no municipal privilege ought to impede the progress of commercial benefit.

As to the objections of innovation and speculation, they are too devoid of reason to need a reply. What is the effect of an increase of knowledge, but an innovation upon the prejudices of ignorance ? or what is commerce, but a system of speculation from first to last ? Would it be right to condemn innovation
when

when it conveys improvement? or speculation when it ensures advantage? Certainly not.

The London Docks rest their establishment and success entirely on their intrinsic utility. They violate no private property—they infringe upon no revenue. On the contrary, they have in view the extension and security of Commerce, and the increase as well as protection of the Revenue of the City of London, and of the Crown. If they are found inadequate to the purposes they hold forth, they will of themselves come to nothing, and by their failure add new importance to the present legal quays. If, on the other hand, they are found to realize all they promise, who will not give their approbation to those men whose abilities and public spirit set them on foot? who will not condemn the opposition they now meet with?

With respect to the plan which the City of London mean to bring forward for accommodating trade, I confess myself totally ignorant of it. I believe, as yet, it has never been made public. But, my Lord, if the City of London were to comprehend in their plan every possible advantage in their power to grant,
there

there still would be an insuperable obstacle to its adoption.

One of the first principles of Commerce is, that all its subordinate departments shall be under due controul. To the want of this controul are to be attributed most of the various misfortunes it sustains. Whenever there is a clashing of interests, if the employed can, by their independance of their employers, form combinations to encrease the charges upon Commerce, and have influence sufficient to prevent reform, then a rapid accumulation of evils ensues, till at length it attains that pitch as to destroy itself by its own enormity. It is not now, for the first time, that the grand question of Reform has been agitated. It has been repeatedly brought forward, and as repeatedly set aside by the combination of the Proprietors and Wharfingers at the Quays, whose interest it was to persevere in a system of corruption. To prevent these combinations in future, and always to possess the Merchants themselves with the means of reform and internal regulation it is, that the London Docks are proposed to be managed by a chartered mercantile company. The City of London, from the nature of their government, and the

the variety of interests which influence its different members, can never possess that unanimity and decision, which are frequently necessary on questions of commerce. Nothing can be more an instance in point, to this observation, than the occurrences of the present period. A grand plan of Reform is brought forward. Of the different members of the Corporation, many wilfully mislead the public mind in its discussion; while by far the greater part are careless which side of the question is carried. The consequence is, that through the base motives of some, and the negligence of others, the whole influence of the City is exerted to negative a measure, which involves in it, not only the accommodation, but the existence of commerce.

It is not, however, as yet too late for the city of London to retrieve the consequences of a line of conduct, which, when their eyes are opened to see the benefits they thus wantonly cast from them, they will sorely repent. The Bill for the establishment of the London Docks is not yet past; they still have it in their power to give it their support. Let then the titles of aliens, innovators, and speculators, be laid aside; and all contending parties unite in the promotion of one important

portant object; including equally the aggrandizement of London, and the advantage of the Revenue, by the extension of trade.

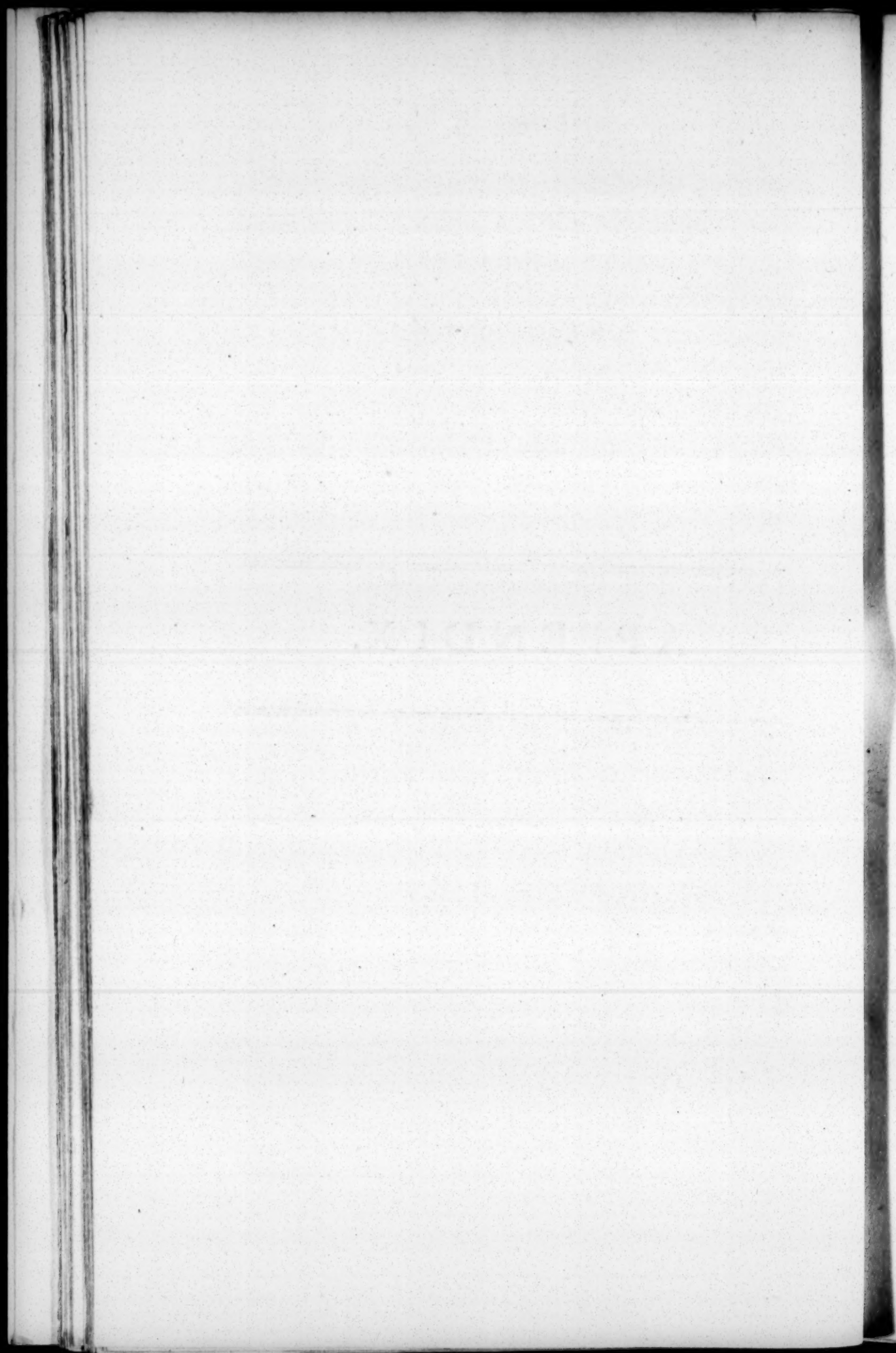
If, however, notwithstanding the conviction of utility, which the measure of establishing wet docks, quays, and warehouses, on this plan, must carry withit to every mind, the City of London still persist in their opposition, I trust the wisdom of the Legislature will adopt it, and ensure to future ages an exemption from those evils that have long needed reform. What a reflection will it be for us to hand to posterity, that in the year 1796, under the administration of a man, who is confessedly allowed to be the first Financier of his time, a Bill was thrown out by the British Parliament, which rescued from the hand of pillage, 150,000*l.* annually to individuals, and 50,000*l.* annual revenue.

In the confident hope, however, that this will not be the case, but that the Houses of Parliament, and the City of London, may decide on so important a subject as it deserves, and exercise that soundness of judgment, which has hitherto marked their proceedings, I have the honour to be, &c.

APPEN-

LONDON, *March 7, 1796.*

APPENDIX.



APPENDIX.

No. I.

EXTRACT from the Report of a Committee of West India Merchants, respecting the business of Landing and Delivering Sugar at the legal Quays, dated 20th of Dec. 1793.

IT is well known that the business of this port, whether of export or import, exceeding in magnitude and consequence that of any port of the world, is, agreeably to the existing regulations, principally confined to the legal

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legal quays, extending (with some interruptions) from the western extremity of Tower-ditch, to London bridge, a space about 500 yards in length, upon which warehouses and other buildings are erected in situations as to leave not more than 3000 square yards, at the utmost, of uncovered space upon the wharfs; a space so exceedingly inadequate to the business of the port of London, that it is not uncommon to see the wharf universally encumbered with piles of costly goods, exposed to every risk of weather and plunderage, while two or three lighters filled with like valuable articles are attending undischarged upon each. Indeed the incompetency of the legal quays will be sufficiently manifest, if we consider them relatively to one species of imported produce alone; the bulky and perishable article of sugar, which is more immediately the concern of this meeting. Of that article the port of London receives from the West India colonies, *communibus annis*, upwards of 100,000 hogsheads, and the major part of that importation must, from the season of its culture, even in time of peace, reach this port within the space of three or four months. The largest and deepest laden ships find it not

safe to advance higher up the river than Deptford; the greater number do not moor within one mile and a half of the nearest legal quays, and few or none can be laid alongside the wharfs. Hence the necessity of numerous lighters; the exposure of produce in them to weather and plunderage; and, from the confined space of the legal quays, the absolute impossibility of discharging them without a detention, injurious both to the craft and to the goods. The warehouses at the legal quays, capable of containing, at the utmost, about 32,000 hogheads of sugar, are quickly filled, and the wharfs are next encumbered; the lighters are at last loaded, without a prospect of discharge; and thus new delays, new losses, and new charges are accumulated.

But, sensible as these evils are at all times, they become much more evident and injurious in time of war; when the arrival of ships in fleets, at a late season of the year, and under circumstances often requiring more than usual dispatch, renders the incompetency of the legal quays no longer a matter of dispute. Upon such occasions, the Commissioners of Customs have not scrupled to grant, to the utmost ex-

tent of their power, that relief which could be obtained by a recourse to the sufferance wharfs within a certain district. But those wharfs, and the buildings upon them, not having been calculated for this adventitious business, are for the most part ill suited for the purpose, and cannot be employed without much additional risk and expence. A recent and fatal instance has occurred, of an immense loss by fire at one of these wharfs*; a circumstance which has rarely happened in warehouses purposely calculated for sugar; and this loss falls the heavier on the concerned; as, from the irregularity and delay of late observed in the landing and housing of sugar, Merchants have been unable to protect themselves and correspondents, with certainty, against such a calamity by insurance. Even with this extraordinary aid from the sufferance wharfs, it is notorious, that several ships, which reported early in September, are now (after three months interval, and after every possible exertion on their parts,) undischarged.

Your Committee will proceed no farther in the tedious detail of difficulties and losses, which are at this moment incident to the pre-

* At Hore's Wharf.

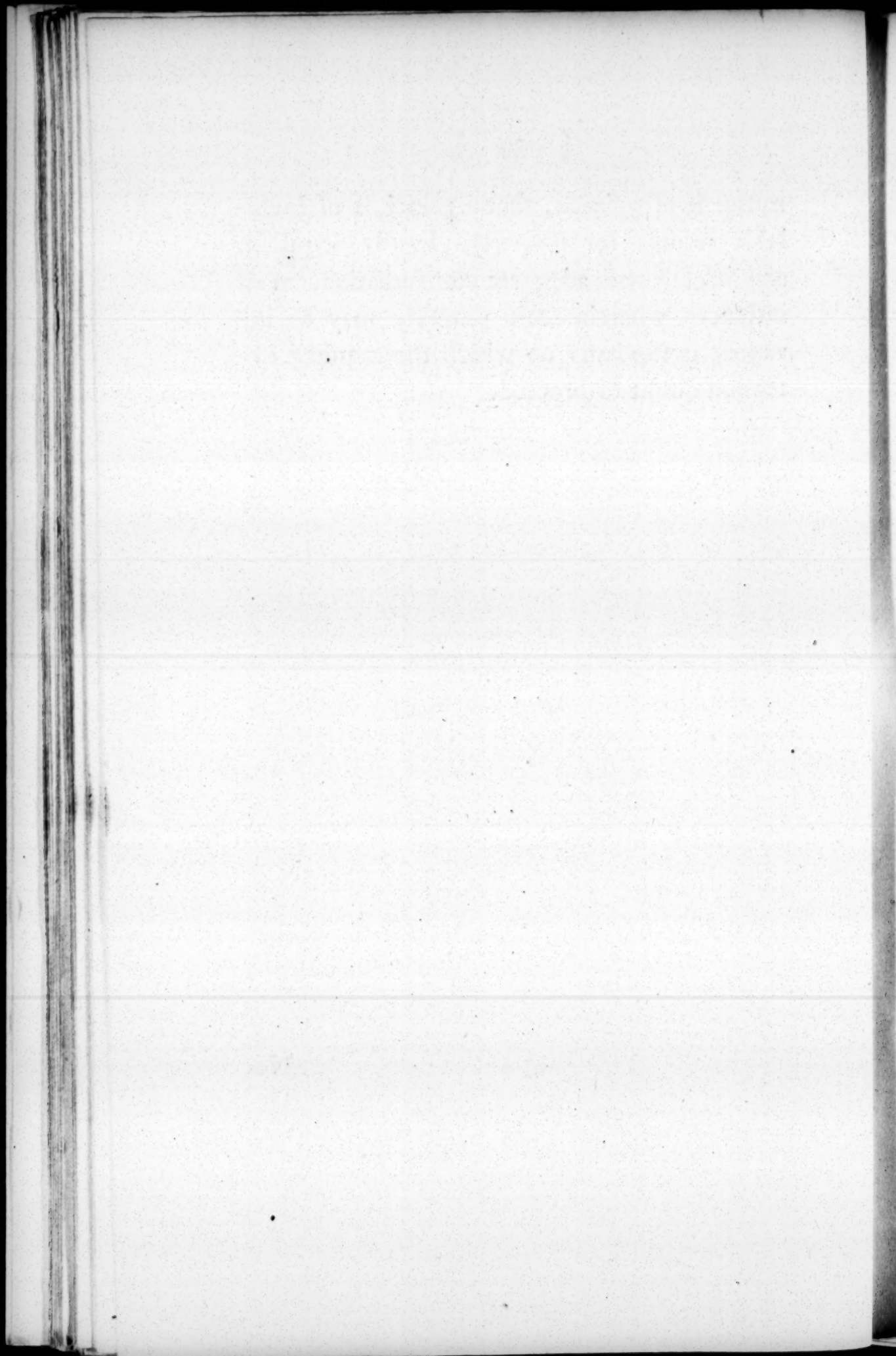
sent year's importation of sugar at this port, although it would not be difficult to prove, that the commerce and revenue of the country are, in common with the property of individuals, greatly involved in that concern. If these considerations be extended to the increasing importation of rum and coffee, articles which are subject to seizure, if not landed in thirty days from the report of the ship, and to the innumerable other articles of produce imported, the incompetency of the legal quays, and the inconvenience of the present system will appear still more striking. In the month of October last, without any want of diligence on the part of the importers, above one half of the importation of rum and coffee must have been seized, had not indulgence been obtained by an extraordinary application to the Lords of the Treasury for that purpose.

Your Committee cannot but consider it as a matter of course, that the legal quays, calculated for the business of this port, while in its infancy, must at length prove inadequate to that business in its mature and prosperous state; and have to observe with concern, that while several of the outports have made a rapid progress in the construction of wet docks,

erection of commodious warehouses, and other means of facilitating the discharge of shipping, thereby greatly advancing their trade and prosperity, the metropolis of Great Britain alone has, in these material respects, remained torpid; its improvements checked or suspended, and its abuses gradually gaining head.

Your Committee, therefore, upon mature investigation of the subject, does not hesitate to declare, that *the existence of the West India trade, at the port of London, is necessarily* connected with a more adequate provision for the discharge of shipping, and the warehousing of produce, than the limits of the legal quays can possibly afford; and that it becomes an enquiry, demanding the serious attention of this Meeting, and meriting the liberal encouragement of every well-wisher to the prosperity of this City, by what plan of extensive accommodation may best be promoted those important objects, in the business of this port, *æconomy, security, and dispatch*: and as no such plan can be adopted without an extension of that exclusive privilege, which has, for many years past, been considered and transferred as property at the legal quays, your Committee

mittee is of opinion, that a principle of inviolable respect for property, legally acquired, and of fair and adequate compensation, in all instances wherein such property may be invaded, is the basis on which the required extension ought to proceed.



No. II.

Copies of the HAND-BILLS which were circulated all over London.

FREEMEN OF LONDON,

THE

CORPORATION

Have pledged themselves to make every convenience that the Merchants can wish for within the

PORT OF LONDON,

And have not a desire to make a Profit of
TEN PER CENT.

AS

TRADERS.

BROTHER FREEMEN,

Never give your consent to the forming a new
City on the
RUIN
Of the old one!

A FREEMAN.

WET

WET DOCKS,
Wharfs, and Warehouses,
IN WAPPING,
AND
R U I N
TO THE
BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK!

Boroughnians, Awake!

Attend to the Plan of these Dock Projectors
Their universal Tax on the Shipping of
the Country!

Their TEN PER CENT.

Accommodation to the Trade of the Port.

Watch their Monopolizing Schemes, so
pregnant with mischief to industrious
Individuals.

Suffer no over-bearing Corporation, so different
in principle from your protecting one of
London, to wrest from you that natural
share

share of the Commerce of this Port which
your situation hath hitherto commanded.

NAVIGABLE CANAL,
From BLACKWALL to WAPPING ;
Or, in other words,
A DOCK,
Three miles long,

Whose extensive banks are intended as recep-
tacles for Corn, Coals, and all other neces-
saries of life coming from the heart of the
country.

Will these articles, think you, be cheaper to
the Poor through the medium of a Mercan-
tile Corporation ? Common sense says no !

Then strangle this Hydra,

MONOPOLY,
in its birth !

Self-preservation demands your exertions.
Landlords look to your Rentals, Leaseholders
look to your Security.

Wharfingers, Warehousemen, Watermen,
Corn-Merchants, Coal-Merchants, Barge-
Builders, Boat-Builders, &c. &c. &c. where
will be your subsistence if this monstrous
scheme takes place.

Prepare

Prepare to see your Parliamentary and Parochial Taxes increased, your means to support the poor reduced, and the traffick which once proudly ranged on your shore, and crowded your streets, the life and consequence of this Borough, all swallowed up in this gulf of Speculation.

Rouse ye, therefore, Boroughnians, and do not condemn the advice of

ANTI-TEN PER CENT.

No. III.

EXTRACTS from Acts of Parliament relative to the jurisdiction and appointment of Legal Quays.

By the 1st Elizabeth, the exclusive privilege of landing, shipping, or discharging goods in the port of London is confined to the legal Wharfs and Quays appointed for the same.

By the 13th and 14th Charles II. Cap. ii. Sec. 14, it is enacted, that the King may from time to time, by his Commission out of the Exchequer, set down and appoint the extent, bounds, and limits in *every port*, &c. and that it shall not be lawful to take up, discharge, or lay on land any goods, wares, or merchandizes, but only upon such open place, quay, or wharf as shall be so assigned *in the port of London or any other port in the kingdom*.

And by the 22d of Charles II. Cap. ii. Sec. 84, an additional act for rebuilding the City of London after the fire, &c. it is provided, that nothing therein contained shall alter any thing
done

done or to be done in pursuance of the above acts, whereby his Majesty may appoint such places to be quays and wharfs, within the City of London, and to declare the bounds, limits, extents, and privileges of the port of London, and of all other ports of England, with several other powers and privileges for the preservation of his Revenue of Customs collected there.



